

NIAGARA GAZETTE

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Chile's murderers

Who murdered Chile?

That was the question asked by a Niagara Gazette editorial a year ago, after a military coup had overthrown the freely-elected Chilean Marxist government of Salvador Allende.

"The question is," the editorial asked, "who were the murderers" of the Allende government? "Specifically, was the United States government one of the murderers? . . . There is some suspicious circumstantial evidence."

The editorial cited acts of political and economic sabotage against the Allende government which involved mysterious sources of money. It also cited the fact that the U.S. State Department admitted it knew of the military coup before it happened.

The editorial concluded: "Congress should find out, and it should not lose another minute before setting about it. . . . If our government . . . had a hand in the overthrow of Chile's government, it would be an international crime comparable to the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. If there was such a crime, it should be revealed and steps should be taken to see that the U.S. never participates in any way in such a crime again."

Many of the questions the Gazette raised were soon being raised in Washington. But the denials from the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department, and others were so prompt, so all-inclusive, and so emphatic that before long, we more than half believed them.

WE SHOULD NOT have been so credulous.

Congressman Michael Harrington of Massachusetts was not so credulous, and in more than a year of quiet investigation he has at last been able to show that the CIA, the State Department, and the National Security Council were at least indirectly involved in the overthrow of Allende.

Congressman Harrington has evidence (which the CIA has not denied) that the CIA spent more than \$8 million to finance various anti-Allende programs in Chile. First, there was \$1 million to back Allende's opponents in the 1969 and 1970 elections that brought him to the presidency. Then there was some \$5 million for strikes and other activities designed to "de-stabilize" the Allende government. Another \$1.5 million went to anti-Allende candidates in the 1973 municipal elections a few months before the military coup (those elections, incidentally, ended in a strong vote of confidence for Allende). Smaller expenditures on other schemes pushed the total above \$8 million.

To be sure, this is not proof that the U.S. directly assisted the Chilean military leaders' revolt and their subsequent suppression of democracy in Chile.

But it is more than ample proof that the United States government was interfering in the internal affairs of another country. This sort of clandestine interference in other countries' internal business is bad at all times. It was especially reprehensible in Chile, which had the longest history of peaceful democratic government in Latin America, and whose government—though the U.S. didn't like its Marxist tint—was unquestionably legitimate.

IN ANOTHER EDITORIAL published at the same time, the Gazette asked, "Is peaceful change possible?"

That editorial concluded: "If we do not help peaceful reformers (like Allende) by treating them at least as well as we treat military dictatorships, then the risk of violent revolutions, civil wars, and guerrilla disturbances will grow as reformers find that violence is their only hope of success. People will fight injustice and oppression, whether we like it or not. The question is whether the United States will give them any incentive to fight with the weapons of peace."

The best incentive we can give, it now appears, is for Congress to abolish the CIA—or at least to clip its wings so effectively that it can never again try to "de-stabilize" a foreign government the U.S. National Security Council doesn't happen to like.

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